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ABSTRACT

The role of the corporate white collar worker is changing to become more complex and technically oriented. As the white collar work force is becoming more educated and accepting the idea of lifelong learning as the key to personal and job growth, the corporate community is recognizing the fact. Corporations are beginning to revise their approach to education and training to meet a fast growing increase in training and education needs and to realize that skills in other than "job-related" areas are justified. Providers of education continue to expand, with private education vendors turning to the corporation as a primary client. Increasingly, workers see the corporation as an expected provider of lifelong education to parallel the personal adult education these same workers are participating in on their own and in the community. The corporation can either provide its own internal (and costly) shadow education system, or it can create an option mix system using both internal and education vendor offerings according to what is most effective for each circumstance. There is a growing need for a program to provide a point of interface between the corporate educator and the education vendor. Its services would include an information gathering system, workshop/conference service, and information distribution service. (YLB)

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ED219509

A Trend to Explore In Adult Education

The White Collar Employee

The Corporation

The Education Provider/Vendor

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This paper addresses a prime concern of the 1980s. The role of the corporate white collar worker is changing. It is becoming more complex and technically oriented. The white collar workforce is becoming more educated and accepting the idea of lifelong learning as the key to personal and job growth.

The corporate community is recognizing this fact and is beginning to revise its approach to education and training to prepare to meet a fast growing increase in training and education needs. It is being pressured by the workforce who, increasingly, see the corporation as an expected provider of lifelong education to parallel the personal adult education these same workers are participating in on their own and in the community.

The corporation can either provide its own internal, and costly, shadow education system or it can create an option mix system using both internal and education vendor offerings according to what is most effective for each circumstance.

There is a growing need for a program that will provide a point of interface between the corporate educator and the education vendor in a planned manner. This paper addresses the various factors leading to this assumption and makes a recommendation as to an approach that could serve this need.

Today, such white collar workers comprise over 50 percent of our working population and so are becoming the trend setters for the total population.

At the same time there is a growing movement in the corporate world. Companies are beginning to recognize that they have a new breed of white collar workers. Going or gone are the large pools of typists and clerks. These have been replaced by the factors we have mentioned. In their place are fast growing departments of marketing analysts, designers, computer professionals and other like knowledge worker groups. The lowly clerical job has also blossomed. Now the clerk may be a part of a small team who handles a subject from beginning to end; receiving it from one department and passing it on to another. Instead of a repetitious coding of a few characters the job now calls for communicating, evaluating, decision making and other skills as personnel spend more time on the exception work, not routinely processed by computers, or take on new areas which may have been impossible to contemplate in the past. The clerical force is now being paid in relation to this new task level and so the competence and productivity of this person has a greater impact on bottom line results than ever before.

The knowledge workers also have a much greater impact on the corporations today. Decisions once made by middle or upper management are now made by technicians or analysts as they design systems and carry out projects.

The company is thus recognizing that it can be very cost effective to provide ongoing training and education to ensure

America is becoming a learning society.

The average white collar worker in our corporations has completed high school and, in addition, has participated in some further formal education. In many knowledge worker departments a majority of the personnel have completed four or more years of formal schooling beyond high school.

The great majority of these persons work in positions whose functions are steadily being changed by factors ranging from the competitive position of the corporation to the changes taking place in our total society. Many of their positions have been created during the past decade as automation, job enrichment and competitive pressures have reshaped the roles of the white collar workforce.

More and more of these workers find themselves recognizing that lifelong learning is a fact of life in order to remain competent as their functions continue to change.

These same persons are in that segment of our society which is in the forefront in taking advantage of learning opportunities in the community. They are the ones using the libraries, buying the 'how to' and 'self help' books, participating in credit and non-credit evening courses and learning 'by doing' through community organizations and groups.

For these people, learning of a lifelong nature is being equated with successful personal and work related growth and fulfillment. They are becoming self-learners and are looking for the resources that will allow them further growth.

that this workforce is competent and productive. This will require a vast increase in such areas as individual needs assessing, course research and development and general learning within the corporation.

The corporation is also beginning to recognize a second fact. The term 'job related' is growing very vague. It is no longer enough to provide merely product related skills. Skills in areas such as communications, decision making and other formerly supervisory/management prerequisites are assuming greater importance among the general workforce. Effective writing, presentation making, time management and the like may be cost justified at many levels today.

Change is coming at the supervisory/management level as well. Not only is there a proportionately greater number of employees in such positions today due to growing team/project environments in corporations but people oriented skills are becoming ever more important in working with a highly educated, socially sensitive workforce in the more complex and pressured work environment of today's fast-changing corporation. The competence of the supervisory/management staff in creating a positive working environment for this workforce will have a growing impact on motivation and thus on productivity and workforce retainment. The retainment of this workforce will likewise be a growing factor as the difficulty and cost of replacing workers in more complex tasks grows. No longer will a half day session suffice to place the new employee in the mainstream.

While workers are steadily becoming more educated and the corporation is beginning to recognize the impact of competence on its endeavors a third force has been entering the picture. This is the provider of training and education. In the past there have been two primary groups in this area. There has been the formal schooling community primarily catering to the individual and the corporate education department satisfying training needs through providing job related training to corporate employees.

The major exception to this, in past decades, was the evening college tuition reimbursement program whereby individuals could participate in courses on their own time in the evening and be reimbursed for some or all of this expense by the company. Through this program the corporation began to be an indirect client of the colleges. Through tax write-offs, so too did the government.

As the need for education has grown within the corporate structure so too has the private educational vendor structure grown. As management became an issue in the corporate training world a number of management training consultants and educational vendors appeared.

It was next the turn of the knowledge workers and the technology units. The number of private educational vendors providing courses and resources for such specialties, from internal auditing to computers, has grown enormously in the past decade alone. It is they who have largely introduced educational technologies as alternate means of learning.

Now, as we enter the Eighties, we are seeing the movement reaching further down into the corporate structure. More and more courses and educational support are being offered in areas which, a decade ago, would have been considered as primarily clerical and so almost devoid of formal training involvement. Today these same employees are involved in using computer terminals and word processing equipment. They are participating in effective writing, communication and decision making courses. Team building, executive secretary, administrative assistant, assertiveness training, time management, motivation -- all of these and many other like programs are being produced for todays office staff.

We have looked quickly at these 3 movements occurring simultaneously. The first is a workforce movement. The white collar workforce has discovered the concept of lifelong learning, not only in a formal degree earning sense, but also as a path to personal and job growth. It has experimented with self learning by personally choosing, using or participating in resource options, ranging from books to long term courses or projects, to gain such knowledge as personally assessed as beneficial. It has accepted the idea of lifelong learning as a way of life in a changing society and as its primary tool for successful growth.

The corporation is concurrently discovering that there is cost justification in providing a large majority of its work-force with an expanded system of ongoing education as needed.

And that such education may encompass not only the previously defined job related skills but many skills of an interpersonal or previously defined supervisory nature as well. It is realizing that there must be a greater merging of training and education since the total person must be considered in assessing todays productivity potential. The day is gone when the corporation could provide a desk, chair and typewriter or adding machine; a two hour on-the-job tutoring session, and a set of procedures and confidently expect that 300 widget reports a day would be processed with no further commitment.

This recognition is causing the corporation to review its training structure, resources and objectives. It is at the stage of defining its new role and the new importance of training and education in the corporation.

Meanwhile the providers of education continue to expand as markets open. Private education vendors, ranging from self instructional resources companies to collegiate centers of higher education are turning to the corporation as a primary client. From management education to technical skills to the area of human relations we find educational products being developed to serve corporate needs. The major concern is the definition of the market. Many education providers are groping in the dark and hesitant to offer or promote services that the market may not be ready or prepared for. Others are still hesitant to change their marketing approach or their prior concept of the gap alleged between training and education.

In the next 5 years this situation is going to come to a head across America. It is going to be fueled by a declining younger workforce and a growing workforce in their 30's. It is going to be further fueled by a more educated white collar workforce. This workforce sees training and education as the answer to successful career growth and as the remunerative basis for entry into that personal life style protrayed in TV and advertising as our middle class image. This workforce will see their more complex roles in the light of careers with an upward mobility pattern, rather than as jobs. They will be less inclined to be satisfied with lower level jobs and so the automating and job enrichment of such jobs will continue while the people are moved into ever more complex technical or semi-professional roles calling for still greater amounts of training. Since there will be a greater number of people in their thirties and forties in relation to the number of supervisory and management roles available many companies will increase the prestige of these roles with fringes like education, in order to retain this staff.

The market will become a buyers market along the lines of todays technology departments with more skilled jobs and less eligible people. Workers will begin to shop the job market.

They will begin to expect ongoing training and educational opportunities as a prerequisite for remaining in a position. Companies will provide a greater latitude of such both because it will be seen as cost justified and because they will recognize the total costs involved in replacing skilled workers.

We can expect that corporations will react in the following ways.

A.) They will provide more job related training to ensure product competence for both current and prospective positions.

B.) They will provide more interpersonal and human relations oriented training.

C.) They will upgrade a formalized program of ongoing supervisory and management training so that management has the tools needed to create a satisfactory working environment and the competence to use their resources in the most effective manner within that environment.

D.) They will provide increasing numbers of staff employees with corporate reimbursed access to 'liberal' education of a non-directly job related type so as to prepare them for the conceptual planning and decision making required for future management.

As you can thus see, the corporation is going to have to respond to the impact of an educated workforce who, having discovered and accepted the advantages of lifelong, adult, and self-learning for personal growth, is going to expect it as a right in the work place as well.

How is the corporation going to respond?

This; rather than whether they will, is probably the predominant question of the Eighties. We must assume that the

successful corporation is going to respond in order to compete and to retain a competent staff.

I see two basic routes that may be taken.

A.) The corporation may choose to create its own total, internal shadow education system.

B.) The corporation may choose to develop an option mix structure whereby it uses both internal and education vendor programs according to the most effective cost justified approach to each assessed need.

Let us look at each of these for a moment. We will begin with the self-contained shadow education system.

Most companies have a training and education department in place today. Although there are a number of exceptions among companies that have recognized the trends we are discussing and who have begun to restructure, the majority are still in the primarily classroom based environment. A certain number of historical classes of a clerical, product or management nature are often offered at stated intervals. Other classes are offered on request if staff, program development time and resources are available. The participation in any single year rarely reaches above 10-15 percent of the total countrywide staff. This is supplemented by a tuition reimbursement program in most cases. Use of such is often of a limited nature.

What must be required to enable this structure to cope with the envisioned scenario whereby the actual needs of each white collar employee is somehow recognized and satisfactory options

developed to provide training in the hundreds of competencies involved in a corporate workforce.

How would a countrywide workforce be effectively serviced?

Picture a corporation with even 5000 white collar workers. What if there were a need to train 85 percent of them an average of 10 days a year each? (That is a typical level in many technology and knowledge worker units today.)

The implications are staggering for the average company. Internal facilities, instructor staffs, A/V departments, travel costs, program development costs -- could most companies develop such a program within 5 years? Probably not. If they could, would it be the most cost effective approach? Probably not. There may be a level of staff size where it could become a cost justifiable method but few companies attain the size where it is logical to internally develop and teach every competency in todays specialist world.

This, then, would probably not be the route that a company would take if it had an alternative.

What, then, would the logical alternative be for most companies? It would be the option mix system we alluded to and which we have a model for on a smaller scale today. Let us look at it.

The data processing (computer) field is perhaps 15 years old insofar as any large scale amount of training is concerned. It is probably the essence of a complex, fast growing, fast changing state. Originally the data processing installation

was much like the typical corporate white collar community. There were operators, a few support people, programmmers, analysts and managers. The hardware vendors acted like the corporate education department in providing regularly scheduled classes in the few basic technical courses required to write a program in a computer language to replace a manual report or activity.

A few larger DP installations began to develop their own installation education units in the late 60's as they had enough trainees to justify developing tailored, procedure and installation unique, courses. There was no need for smaller installations to do so as the cost of the training was a part of the hardware fee and it was reasonable to teach unique procedures through production unit on job training.

In 1970 this changed. Course costs were separated from hardware costs. At the same time there was a growth in the number of courses needed to satisfy growing specialty needs as data processing became more complex in nature. Education vendors appeared to offer courses. DP installations found that there was often justification for using a vendor course rather than developing the course in-house for a few individuals.

Over the years this approach has grown as installations have enlarged and grown more complex. Hundreds of separate competency needs have been recognized and systems have been developed to define these and assess the needs of every individual in the installation. Once such assessments have been made for a time period then options are either found or

developed to satisfy them using a number of different techniques. The installation might make use of corporate resources or local colleges. It might use video based or other self-instructional media. It might use educational vendor courses or might develop its own courses. Each decision would depend on the feasibility of one option over another.

For years some large installations strove to maintain internal training programs to the exclusion of other resources. Such became inefficient as the number of needs grew. It was far more effective to use an option mix, including personally developed and taught materials when this was the most effective ways but in no way confined to such.

The problem today is ensuring that sufficient educational vendor support is available to satisfy the needs. In order to affect this status the DP Educator community and the educator vendor community work very closely together in both local and national settings to ensure that needs are recognized and services to satisfy them developed.

The corporation is likewise going to find that an option mix structure will be the most feasible manner in which to approach the Eighties. There will probably be two levels of education structure in most corporations. One level will be that of the corporate training and education department. The other will be the functional product line or divisional education unit in each specialty area.

The corporate level will probably have three prime elements as follows.

A.) The traditional learning center classroom based element. This element will probably provide group training in areas of general need, corporate unique areas and supervisory/management areas. It may operate out of central or regional centers combined with field on-premises courses as justified.

B.) A self-instructional element. This element will develop a variety of courses using various self-instructional technologies ranging from video to programmed instruction. It may serve as the central point for distribution of both in-house developed and education vendor self-instructional material for the countrywide employee population.

C.) A training system design and consulting element. This group would provide a total training system design for the corporation and then provide support to implement and maintain this design at the divisional training unit level through an education consultant service.

This group would probably also be responsible for research and evaluation of educational vendor options and for working with divisional education staffs to determine options to satisfy their needs. In this way one element in the corporate education structure would be in a position to be aware of a large number of vendor options to be recommended, as necessary,

to elements across the corporate education structure. They would probably be the prime liaison with the education vendor community.

As corporations recognize the need to be aware of a wide variety of potentially satisfying educational options, they are going to begin researching the entire educational vendor field to find such options. This brings us to the next series of questions.

What means do we have today for corporate educators and educational vendors to become aware of each other's needs and products to the benefit of the corporation, education vendor and individual learner?

Are there sufficient educational vendors in the marketplace to cope with the projected needs?

Are marginal educational vendors going to be able to infiltrate any vacuum and so create waves of dissention as to using vendor options?

Is it possible to make current or potential education vendors more aware of the prospective market so that they may begin to develop satisfactory option services?

I believe that it is time that these questions were seriously considered. I have stated that the corporation community is most unlikely to go their own way and create their own internal shadow education systems if an alternative existed. They will have to do so, however, due to the pressures of both effective productivity and the new breed of workforce expecting this service, if an adequate option market is not available as the need arises.

Our education vendor market is not sufficient today to service the staggering education growth potential outlined above. Nor could we expect it to be when the market has neither appeared yet nor been defined or publicized. The question is will it be ready five years from now through osmosis? I believe that if we have to wait for the normal 'reaction' to new markets the vendors will never catch up with the exploding needs.

What might we begin to do today, educators and education vendors alike, to prepare for tomorrow? I would like to offer a recommendation.

First, however, I should like to recognize three roles to which this paper is primarily addressed. I believe that each of us can recognize ourselves in one or more of these roles and can look at this recommendation from our own role and ask how we may be able to make it a potential reality using our own resources.

We are either primarily representing the corporate education community or we are a provider or prospective provider of learning to that community or we are what I term as "catalysts' who, connected with groups or associations or as individuals, are primarily concerned with the inter-relationships of these groups as a part of the total adult education picture. As the latter it is possible to be a mover in bringing that interface about.

Let us look at the role of the person responsible, in the corporation, for the overall training system design and

the option research and evaluation. This person is the key interface between the corporation and the education vendor community. This person is, basically, the corporate client as, until this person becomes aware of a vendor or option, it is unlikely that the option will be used in the corporation on any large scale as a needs satisfier. If such an option is not recognized, whether it is there or not, the corporation is likely to assume that it must develop such an option internally. This person is also the one with the widest knowledge of the corporate needs as assessed by whatever internal system as is used.

It is therefore very important that this person in the corporation be in some type of an interface position with the educational vendor community so that:

A) Potential markets may be recognized and prepared for by the educational vendor community;

B) That potential options available or being prepared to satisfy various needs become known to the corporate educator.

It would seem to me that an association would be the key. Otherwise thousands of individuals would be continually trying to find each other in a huge game of "blindmans bluff". Let me provide a scenario.

First we wave our magic wand and create a mythical association, ATVA -- Amalgamated Trainer/Vendor Association.

This would be an association which everyone concerned with this concept -- corporate educators, education vendors or

those who put on the catalyst mantle -- can join. Its purpose is to provide a communications network between education communities for the following reasons.

To provide a widespread picture of the state of the art in both corporate education and education vendor options.

To provide a widespread picture of the resources and options available.

To explore trends and identify situations to be addressed prior to their happening.

Its primary tools might consist of an information gathering system, a workshop/conference service and an information distribution service which may include literature, newsletters, etc.

These services would be aimed at the three major clients we focused upon.

1. The educator in the corporation who becomes the interface.
2. The educational vendor representative.
3. The objective 'catalyst' community.

It is in this way that this organization would primarily differ from those active today who primarily serve total generic educator populations and who may or may not allow educational vendors into membership. This association would emphasize lines of communication between those defined roles above.

Via the systems and services above, the association might collect and distribute information as follows.

1. Regularly conducted surveys to members.

   A) To the corporate interfaces -- corporate needs surveys (form can be anonymous if this is a factor).

   B) To the vendor membership -- option services available or under development.

   The results of such surveys, clipping services and trend study committees, etc., would provide input to:

2. Regularly issued newsletters and bulletins.

   A) To all members -- outlining the needs assessment picture as it develops and the recognized trends and possible impacts that should be considered.

   B) To at least the corporate interfaces -- listings of known resource compilations such as books containing large numbers of resources by media or competency groups and information of value to the self-development of such educators in their emerging role.

3. A mailing list of all corporate educators in the association to be available for sale to the education vendor community or to other educators. This serves four purposes.

   A) It ensures that vendors are aware of corporations that may be interested in such services as they may offer so that they can provide them with literature directly rather than using a 'shotgun'

approach of mailing to such individuals whose names they may have received from a number of sources.

B) Ensures that the corporate educator has a means of becoming aware of the availability of such options.

C) Allows educators to become aware of counterparts in other companies.

D) Provides a portion of the funding of this association.

Yes -- there would be a lot of waste. Many circulars would be discarded. But not as much waste as is being carried on today where, with a 'shotgun' approach, an extremely large percentage of mailings are received or discarded by those not wanting such originally or not presently interested.

The corporate educator would join this association partially because he wants and needs this review service. He can easily discard those of no interest or file them for future use, but he is aware of them. Then he is in a position to research and evaluate those he is interested in against his own environmental standards and needs.

4. Conferences and workshops

Programs available to any members and tailored to discussions of particular aspects of this field. Examples might be:

A) A workshop on developing a local consortium between companies and a vendor in one's local area.

B) A workshop on planning for and implementing a long range program to develop a working relationship between corporations and centers for higher learning locally.

C) Workshops for developing and implementing local special interest groups whereby corporate educators could meet face to face and develop needed local programs to help satisfy their self-development and informational needs.

D) Conferences or workshops relating to aspects of the role of the corporate educator in this new environment.

These programs could, along with mailing list sales and membership fees, aid in establishing a portion of the operating budget for the association.

Who is going to bell the cat? Who are the individuals, groups or associations who are in a position to develop such an association? I do not know at this moment. I am currently projecting a prospective future and its alternatives. I am suggesting one approach that might alleviate some of the problems that might otherwise be encountered. I am, primarily, asking others to give some further thought to this potential and, possibly, produce alternative approaches to the one I offer.

I have tried to show the benefits that can accrue to all groups by finding a common meeting ground where they might work together in some manner.

I would be interested in hearing any feedback in regard to this paper.